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TAGS: PEPR, US, UR, PARM, SALT
SUBJECT: TROUBLED SOVIET-U.S. RELATIONS

SUMMARY: EXTENSIVE SOVIET COMMENTARY IN RECENT WEEKS ON
SOVIET-U.S. RELATIONS, AND PARTICULARLY ON SALT, APPEARS
TO US TO REFLECT BOTH SHORT-TERM SOVIET FRUSTRATIONS IN
RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND ALSO PERSISTENT SOVIET

PROBLEMS IN DEALING WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD. MOSCOW WANTS A RAPID CONCLUSION TO SALT II BUT APPEARS UNWILLING TO RECOGNIZE THAT ITS OWN ACTIONS HAVE COMPLICATED THE PROCESS. THIS UNWILLINGNESS DRAWS ON SOVIET OBJECTIVE TO ISOLATE U.S.-SOVIET BILATERAL RELATIONS FROM MOSCOW'S EFFORTS TO PURSUE POLITICAL ADVANTAGES AND DEMONSTRATE ITS REVOLUTIONARY CREDENTIALS IN THE THIRD WORLD. IT IS ALSO BASED IN MOSCOW'S STILL RELATIVELY RUDIMENTARY VIEW OF WESTERN POLITICAL REALITIES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SUDDEN SURGE OF SOVIET PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON STRATEGIC WEAPONS LIMITATIONS SINCE PRAVDA'S MASSIVE EDITORIAL ARTICLE OF FEB. 11 INEVITABLY RAISES THE QUESTION: WHY? THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REASONS FOR THIS FLOW OF WORDS, THE LATEST OF WHICH IS BREZHNEV'S VEILED WARNING AT THE SUPREME SOVIET ON FEB. 24 THAT HE HOPED THAT THE U.S. REALIZES "HOW MUCH IS AT STAKE" IN THE RAPID CONCLUSION OF A NEW SALT AGREEMENT. CLEARLY AMONG THE REASONS FOR THE RECENT CAMPAIGN ARE CONTINUED LEAKS IN THE U.S. BY OPPONENTS OF SALT, GREATER SOVIET EXPOSURE TO CONGRESSIONAL OPINION, CONCERN OVER ADMINISTRATION NEGOTIATING TACTICS (UNDER WHICH THE SOVIETS PROBABLY INCLUDE AT LEAST SOME OF THE LEAKS), PROBLEMS CREATED BY THE EXTENSION OF THE NUMERICAL LIMITS IMPOSED BY THE INTERIM AGREEMENT, AND A REALIZATION THAT THE MID-TERM CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS COULD DELAY SENATORIAL

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CONSIDERATION OF A NEW TREATY FOR UPWARDS OF SIX MONTHS. THESE REASONS ARE ALL INTRINSIC TO THE SALT PROCESS ITSELF AND WEIGH HEAVILY IN SOVIET MINDS, BUT THEY DO NOT FULLY EXPLAIN THE VOLUME AND INTENSITY OF THE SOVIET STATEMENTS WE HAVE SEEN IN RECENT WEEKS.

2. IN HIS TULA SPEECH OF JANUARY 18, 1977 BREZHNEV SPOKE VERY HOPEFULLY AND WITH CONSIDERABLY URGENCY OF THE NEED TO CONCLUDE QUICKLY A NEW STRATEGIC ARMS AGREEMENT BASED ON THE VLADIVOSTOK UNDERSTANDINGS. HE ANNOUNCED THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS READY TO ACHIEVE WITH THE NEW ADMINISTRATION "A NEW MAJOR IMPROVEMENT" IN U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS, AND WARNED AGAINST PUTTING OFF THE CONCLUSION OF AN AGREEMENT. MORE THAN A YEAR HAS PASSED SINCE THE TULA SPEECH AND NEGOTIATIONS HAVE PROVEN TO BE FAR MORE COMPLEX AND LENGTHY THAN THOSE APPARENTLY ENVISAGED BY THE SOVIET LEADERS IN EARLY 1977.

3. BY NOW MOSCOW PUBLICLY, AND ALMOST CERTAINLY PRIVATELY, BLAMES THE LENGTH AND COMPLEXITY OF THESE TALKS ON THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. AT TULA, BREZHNEV DEFINED DETENTE AS "A CERTAIN CONFIDENCE AND ABILITY TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

ONE ANOTHER'S VITAL INTERESTS", AND THROUGH THEIR RECENT STATEMENTS ON SALT THE SOVIET LEADERS ARE APPARENTLY ATTEMPTING TO SHOW THAT THIS DEFINITION NO LONGER FULLY APPLIES TO SOVIET-U.S. RELATIONS DUE TO CHANGED PERSPECTIVES IN WASHINGTON. THE REASONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS VIEW, IN TURN, PROVIDE CONSIDERABLE LIGHT ON THE CURRENTLY SOUR SOVIET MOOD.

4. OBVIOUSLY MUCH OF BREZHNEV'S LOGIC AND URGENCY AT TULA AND AT THE SUPREME SOVIET SESSION OF FEB. 24 OF THIS YEAR CAN BE REGARDED AS SELF-SERVING, I.E., SOVIETS WANT AN AGREEMENT QUICKLY AND ON THEIR TERMS. SIMILARLY, MOSCOW SEES ITS INTERESTS BEST SERVED BY ISOLATING

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ITS ACTIVITIES IN THE THIRD WORLD FROM BILATERAL
RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., SO AS TO GAIN POLITICAL ADVANTAGES
OVER THE WEST AND TO DEMONSTRATE ITS REVOLUTIONARY
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CREDENTIALS AT HOME AND ABROAD WITHOUT, IT HOPES,
JEOPARDIZING ITS GOALS IN RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. IN
THIS RESPECT, THERE IS NOTHING EXCEPTIONAL ABOUT THE
RECENT SALT CAMPAIGN. NEVERTHELESS, BEHIND THESE
TRADITIONAL TACTICS LIE A PECULIARLY SOVIET VIEW OF THE
WORLD AND OF FOREIGN BEHAVIOR. THIS IS PARTICULARLY
TRUE WITH RESPECT TO SOVIET STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE
REVIVAL OF "FORCES" HOSTILE TO DETENTE AND CONCERNING
THE INCREASED INFLUENCE OF THE "HAWKS" IN THE U.S.

5. IT IS ONE OF MOSCOW'S SHORTCOMINGS THAT IT TENDS TO
LOOK UPON SOCIETY AND POLITICS ABROAD IN A HIGHLY STATIC
FORM. THAT IS, THE USSR SEES POLITICAL LIFE IN THE U.S.
AND ELSEWHERE IN THE WEST AS A CONTEST BETWEEN INTEREST
GROUPS OR CLASSES IN SOMETHING LIKE A VACUUM IN WHICH
THESE GROUPS OR CLASSES TAKE ON A LIFE AND A RIGID FORM
OF THEIR OWN. THIS VIEW, OF COURSE, HAS LITTLE RELATION-
SHIP TO THE DYNAMIC INTERACTION OF INTERESTS AND GOALS
THAT CHARACTERIZE WESTERN POLITICAL LIFE AND IT OFTEN
MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR THE SOVIET LEADERS TO UNDERSTAND
OR TO INFLUENCE IN A SIGNIFICANT WAY WESTERN POLITICAL
DECISIONS AND THE PROCESSES BY WHICH THEY ARE REACHED.
IN PARTICULAR, MOSCOW HAS DIFFICULTY (OR AT LEAST SEEMS
UNWILLING) UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTING THE ROLE OF PUBLIC
OPINION IN THIS PROCESS. BREZHNEV SAID AT TULA THAT
"SERIOUS POLITICIANS" IN THE WEST REJECT THE NOTION OF
SOVIET AGGRESSION; MOST RECENTLY IN HIS FEB. 24 SPEECH
BREZHNEV CLAIMED THAT "FORCES" HOSTILE TO GOOD SOVIET-
U.S. RELATIONS HAVE SOUGHT TO BLOCK SALT AND UNDERMINE
DETENTE. INsofar AS THIS RUDIMENTARY VIEW OF THE
EVOLUTION OF U.S. POLICY REPRESENTS THE TRUE SOVIET
PERCEPTION OF THE U.S., IT CAN ONLY BE SAID TO BE MIS-
LEADING AND WILL ONLY HINDER THE CAUSE OF MUTUAL
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UNDERSTANDING.

6. IN THIS RESPECT, THE WESTERN CONCEPT OF POLITICAL LINKAGE HAS ALWAYS BEEN PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT FOR THE SOVIET LEADERS TO ACCEPT WHEN IT INVOLVES MAJOR ISSUES LIKE SALT. IN THE PRESENT INSTANCE, MOSCOW CLAIMS (AND PROBABLY BELIEVES) THAT THERE IS NO REASON TO JUDGE THE MERITS OF A SALT TREATY ON THE BASIS OF EVENTS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA. HAVING RECEIVED AN AMERICAN PRESIDENT IN MOSCOW WHILE THE U.S. WAS BOMBING HANOI AND MINING HAIPHONG HARBOR, THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP ALMOST CERTAINLY CANNOT (OR IS UNWILLING TO) UNDERSTAND WHY THE U.S. WILL NOT TREAT SALT AND THE HORN AS DISCRETE POLITICAL ISSUES HAVING NO INTER-RELATIONSHIP WHATSOEVER. SINCE THEY ON OCCASION AT LEAST HAVE REJECTED LINKAGE POLITICS, THE SOVIETS CANNOT SEE WHY THE U.S. DOES NOT VIEW ITS INTERESTS IN THE SAME WAY.

7. BECAUSE THE SOVIET MIND TENDS TO REGARD WORDS AS TOOLS TO REACH POLITICAL OBJECTIVES, MOSCOW PROBABLY LABELS AS MERELY SELF-SERVING NEGOTIATING TACTICS U.S. ASSERTIONS THAT SOVIET BEHAVIOR IN THE HORN WORSENS THE ATMOSPHERE FOR A STRATEGIC ARMS ACCORD. FURTHER, THE SOVIETS TAKE A SIMILARLY SUSPICIOUS VIEW OF STATEMENTS THAT SENATORIAL OPPOSITION WILL MAKE RATIFICATION OF A NEW SALT AGREEMENT DIFFICULT. SINCE THEY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO COMPREHEND THE DYNAMICS OF A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY, THE SOVIET LEADERS TEND TO VIEW WESTERN POLITICS CYNICALLY AND SIMPLISTICALLY. THIS VIEW IS UNDOUBTEDLY INTENSIFIED BY THE ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO REINVIGORATE U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE DEVELOPED NATIONS AND TO DEFINE A BROADER U.S. ROLE IN AREAS SUCH AS AFRICA, AND THE MIDDLE EAST WHICH MOSCOW MUST SEE AS AN EFFORT TO DENIGRATE SOVIET GREAT POWER STATUS AND TO TREAT IT AS LESS THAN AN EQUAL.

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8. IN CONCLUSION, THEN, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN A TIME OF UNEASY SOVIET ADJUSTMENT TO THE POLICIES OF THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION. IN OUR VIEW, THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE PRESENT SOVIET LEADERSHIP WANTS TO CONCLUDE SALT II AND TO MOVE ON TO SALT III AND THAT IT WANTS TO PERPETUATE -- AND IF POSSIBLE ENHANCE --

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AN ATMOSPHERE OF DETENTE - BUT ON SOVIET TERMS FOR THE
MOST PART. AT THE SAME TIME, THE USSR CONTINUES TO SHOW
LITTLE AWARENESS THAT MANY OF THE IMPEDIMENTS TO
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ACHIEVING THESE OBJECTIVES ARE OF ITS OWN MAKING AND THAT
THERE IS A CONTRADICTION BETWEEN A DESIRE TO ACHIEVE
STABLE U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS AND A DETERMINATION TO SEEK
UNILATERAL POLITICAL GAINS IN THE THIRD WORLD.

9. CONTACTS SUCH AS THOSE MADE DURING THE PONOMAREV
VISIT AND SENATOR STEVENSON'S TRIP TO MOSCOW CAN HELP

OVER THE LONGER TERM GIVE THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP A BROADER
AND MORE NUANCED VIEW OF THIS U.S. POLITICAL PROCESS.
IT IS THUS USEFUL FOR BOTH THE U.S. AND THE SOVIET UNION
THAT SOVIET PUBLIC FIGURES, ESPECIALLY AT LEADERSHIP
LEVELS, HAVE AS MUCH EXPOSURE AS POSSIBLE TO CURRENTS
AND TRENDS OF AMERICAN POLITICS. SUCH CONTACTS MAY
HELP PERSUADE THE SOVIET LEADERS THAT THEY CANNOT HAVE
THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS AND THAT SOVIET INTERNATIONAL
BEHAVIOR WILL INEVITABLY INFLUENCE U.S.-SOVIET
BILATERAL RELATIONS. TOON

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